

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

Program: 1.2 AGD Operating Expenses - National Security and Criminal Justice

Question No. AE17/149

Senator Pratt, Louise asked the following question at the hearing on 24 March 2017:

1. The Minister's media release 'Once again, Labor goes weak on illegal firearms trafficking' dated 14 February 2017, states:

"Labor's vote against mandatory minimum sentences for illegal firearms trafficking is a vote in support of criminals."

- a) Do any guidelines or rules govern what content can be put on Department websites?
- b) Are there rules surrounding political content by the Minister on Department websites?
- c) Did the Department review this media release before it was published on the Minister's Departmental website?

2. The Department's own Guide to Framing own Guide to Framing Commonwealth Offences, Infringement Notices and Enforcement Powers states that mandatory minimum sentences interfere with judicial discretion to impose a penalty appropriate in the circumstances of a particular case and may create an incentive for a defendant to fight charges, even where there is little merit in doing so.

- a) Why has the Department now published content saying that a vote against mandatory minimum sentences is a vote in support of criminals?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

1. a) Yes.
b) Yes.
c) Yes.
2. a) It is standard practice for departmental websites to host Ministerial press releases.